

NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) Update
New World Screwworm: Increased activity in southern New Mexico

October 26, 2026

New World Screwworm (NWS) is a re-emerging myiasis that is now circulating in southern New Mexico. Eight locally acquired cases in animals, including horses, cattle, sheep, and dogs, have been identified in five counties in southern New Mexico, with six of these cases detected since October 15, 2026. Refer to [New Mexico Interactive Map of NWS Zones](#) for additional information. As of late October 2026, warm temperatures and moisture from recent rains in southern New Mexico are favorable for NWS spread. No domestically acquired human infestations have been identified in the United States.

NWS should be considered in patients who present with compatible signs and symptoms and who reside in or who have spent time in areas with local transmission, including southern New Mexico. Healthcare providers should have a high index of suspicion for NWS in patients who present with clinical or social factors that hinder self-care, including advanced age, substance use, and lack of adequate housing, or have health conditions that increase the risk of chronic open wounds. While human cases are rare, it is critical that healthcare providers be vigilant to assure early detection, prompt treatment, and immediate public health reporting.

NWS is not directly transmissible from animals to people, among people, or among animals. Infestations are acquired only from eggs laid on wounds or mucous membranes by the NWS fly. NWS does not infest meat, fruits, vegetables, or other food products. Any affected animal would be identified during USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service inspection, and no contaminated product would enter commerce.

Recommendations for Clinicians:

- **Include NWS myiasis in the differential when a patient presents with consistent clinical signs and a history of potential exposure, including time spent in southern New Mexico.**
- **Remove and properly dispose of all larvae and eggs that are not submitted for diagnosis to avoid introducing them into the environment.**

Healthcare providers should consider NWS if the patient:

- Was in or near an area where NWS is known to be present within 10 days of symptom onset. This includes southern New Mexico, southwestern Texas, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.
- Has a wound that has any of the following characteristics:
 - Is very painful and/or foul-smelling.
 - Is deep and/or has extensive tissue damage.
 - Has evidence of larval infestation.
 - Has a visible egg mass in or around the wound (or mucous membrane).

All suspect human cases must be reported immediately to NMDOH 24/7/365 at 1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773). Staff will provide detailed guidance regarding specimen submission and diagnosis.

Visit [ScrewwormNM.org](https://www.nmhealth.org/screwworm) for New Mexico-specific information regarding NWS in animals and humans.

Background:

NWS myiasis occurs when NWS flies lay eggs in wounds or in body cavities with mucous membranes, such as the nose, ears, eyes, mouth, or other body orifice.



*A New World screwworm larva (top)
compared with the larger bot fly larva (bottom)
Photo courtesy Mark Fox, CDC*

- The eggs develop into parasitic larvae (maggots) that feed on and burrow into living flesh, in contrast with most forms of myiasis where the maggots consume only dead tissue.
- Although they primarily affect livestock, the flies may lay eggs on any warm-blooded animal, including domestic pets, wildlife, and humans.
- As of October 25, 2026, NWS infestations have been confirmed in 65 animals in New Mexico and Texas. It has been detected in over 209,400 animals and 2,800 humans across Central America and Mexico. After cattle, dogs are the second most-commonly affected species in Mexico.

Risk Factors

When NWS are present in the environment, factors that may increase an individual's risk include:

- Clinical or social conditions that hinder self-care.
- Spending a lot of time outdoors.
- Sleeping outdoors or with open, unscreened windows and/or doors in these areas, especially during the day.
- Living, working, or spending an extended amount of time with or near livestock or other warm-blooded animals in areas where NWS flies are present.
- Have any of the following health conditions that increase the risk of chronic open wounds:
 - A weakened immune system.
 - Medical conditions that can cause bleeding or open sores on skin or mucous membranes, such as skin cancer.
 - Diabetes.
 - Poor oral hygiene or gum disease.
 - Have pre-existing open wounds regardless of size, including scratches, cuts, or insect bites.

Diagnosis and Notification to Public Health

Diagnosis is made through identifying morphological features of the larvae. All suspect human cases must be reported immediately to NMDOH 24/7/365 at 1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773).

Specimen collection

- Healthcare providers should use standard precautions when handling larvae.
- All extracted larvae should be placed immediately into 70% ethanol (preferred) or 70% (or greater) isopropanol in a leak proof container that holds enough liquid to submerge all larvae.
- Ten larvae, comprising a representative sample including larvae that are different sizes and from different depths and areas of the wound, should be submitted to the New Mexico Scientific Laboratory for diagnosis. If there are fewer than 10 larvae collected, submit them all.

Specimen shipping

- Healthcare providers and laboratories should immediately report suspected NWS cases in humans to NMDOH at 833-796-8773 to coordinate shipping specimens.
- Specimens must be shipped in 70% ethanol or isopropanol in a leak proof container that holds enough liquid to submerge all larvae. They should be sent at ambient (room) temperature.

Specimen Disposal

- **Do not dispose of any larvae in the trash or outside on the ground. Failure to kill and properly dispose of all larvae or eggs may result in the introduction and spread of NWS in the local environment.**
- Submerge the remaining larvae and eggs in 70% ethanol or isopropanol in a leak-proof container and place the container into a zip-top plastic bag and seal it.
- Examine patient linens or belongings for any larvae that may have left the wound.
- Dispose of the sealed bag according to your facility's medical waste disposal protocol.

Treatment

There are no medications currently approved for treatment of NWS infestation in humans. Treatment consists of removal of **ALL** larvae. Surgical debridement may be indicated as larvae may burrow deep into wounds. Healthcare providers should be aware of the potential for secondary bacterial infections with NWS myiasis and patients should be assessed clinically for signs of bacterial infection.

- Larvae and eggs should be killed by placing them into a leak-proof container with 70% ethanol (preferred) or isopropanol. The volume of liquid in the container should be enough to fully submerge the larvae.
- Do NOT dispose of extracted larvae or eggs in the trash or on the ground.
- Re-examine treated lesions after 24 to 48 hours to confirm no live larvae remain.

Clinicians with questions about patient management can contact the University of New Mexico Health System Physician Access Line 24/7 consultation and referral services for healthcare professionals (UNM PALS) at 505-272-2000 or contact NMDOH 24/7/365 at 1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773).

Prevention

Patients spending time in areas where NWS is present should:

- Clean and cover all wounds in any location on the body, no matter how small.
- Prevent insect bites by:
 - Using an [EPA-registered insect repellent](#)
 - Treating clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin
 - Wearing loose fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants, hats, and socks.

- Avoid sleeping outdoors when possible, especially during the daytime. If sleeping outdoors is unavoidable, use a bed net or sleep inside a screened tent.

Additional Resources:

- Questions about NWS in an animal? Consult the New Mexico Livestock Board at (505) 841-6161 during business hours; after hours, call the AgroGuard Hotline at 1-800-525-2782. Additional details can be found at [New World Screwworm Awareness for New Mexico](#).
- Healthcare providers are encouraged to review the comprehensive information and resources provided in CDC's HAN: [New World Screwworm: Outbreak Moves into Northern Mexico | HAN | CDC](#).
- Training: [Training for Healthcare Providers: Rapid Recognition and Response to New World Screwworm](#) (Continuing Education available; TRAIN account needed)
- Handout: [NWS Recommendations for Healthcare Providers / Miasis por el gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo: Recomendaciones para los proveedores de atención médica](#)
- Handout: [New World Screwworm: What Healthcare Workers Need to Know | Project Firstline | CDC](#)
- Webpage: [Clinical Overview of New World Screwworm for health care providers / Información clínica sobre la miasis por el gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo](#)
- Webpage: [New World Screwworm Awareness for New Mexico](#)
- Recorded Webinar: CDC Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) (Oct. 2024) [Resurgence of New World Screwworm in the Americas: What Healthcare Providers Need to Know | COCA | CDC](#) (Continuing Education available)
- Recorded Webinars: Extension for Community Health Outcomes Webinars (ECHO) (YouTube Videos)
 - Resurgence of New World Screwworm in the Americas: [For Physicians and Health Care Providers](#)
 - For Community Health Workers and Public Health Professionals: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the NM Health Alert Network, please visit the following site <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjZ/10b2> Please fill out the registration form completely and click Submit at the bottom of the page, to begin receiving important health alerts, advisories, and updates.

Please Note that our system also utilizes text messaging to notify members of important health information. Due to FCC Regulation changes that are designed to decrease the amount of unwanted spam text messages sent each year to citizens, please save, this phone number **(855) 596-1810** as the **“New Mexico Health Alert Network”** default phone number for your account used for text messages on the mobile device(s) you register with us.